

Calvert



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Calvert

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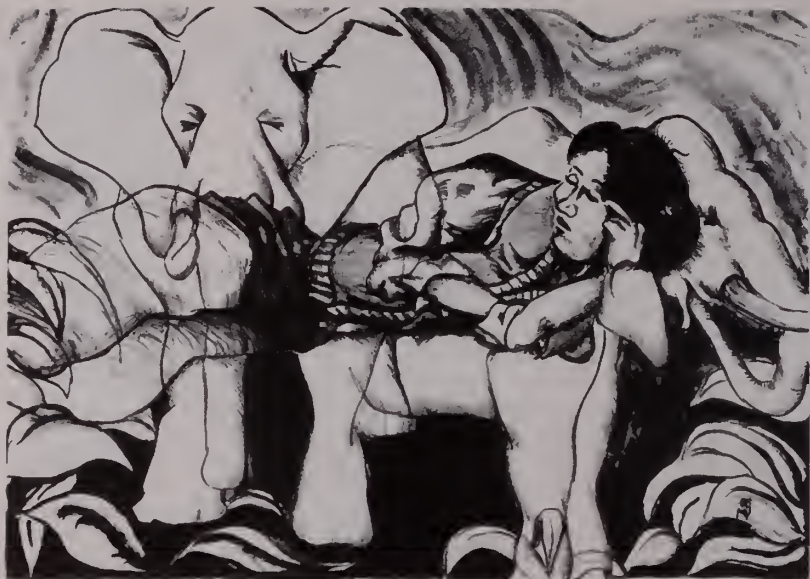


Kelly Waalkes

For a Bartender

Right now it is twelve fifteen and I know
you are leaning over the bar, telling
the waitress and busboy stories of a hotel pool
at three A.M. You say we both went in
naked, though I wore my shorts and T-shirt,
and made you hang your pants on the ladder
that led to the shallow end. You say
the party we left behind watched from the window.
What you don't say is how you swam up
behind me, my shoulders between your hands, or that
my hair on the pillow, later, smelled
of cuervo gold and chlorine; I looked brave to you
because everyone else backed out. From now on
you will always see me damp, slightly drunk
and shaking, with the haze around my skin that treated
water leaves in your eyes, and I will see you
blinking against the cold air, cold water, not believing
me at first when I say, "They're coming, I think
they saw us," as though you think that the pool
is really open, that the guard chair is held
by a man in blue trunks, swinging
a silver whistle, and the lights, from the deep
to the shallow end, are on.

—Rose Solari



Dreams of White Elephants

R.J. Moore

What Would Make A Boy Think To Kill Bats?

I'd always thought I knew how bats caught bugs,
Big mouths opening spiked with rodent teeth,
But no, they scoop their prey up in midair
By cupping the web between hind legs and tail.
Watching them in slow motion made me think
How many nightfalls in the failing light,
How many nights in the succeeding shadow,
As a boy, I watched them browse and never saw
How for an instant with cupped wings and tail
They made their bodies into leather baskets,
Or how, in flight, they dipped their heads far in
To pluck the catch up out of the bottom,
Sometimes performing a somersault full tuck.

At twelve I found them — dozens draped heads down
Around the walls inside the dairy, sleeping.
Strange, I plucked them in their sleep with a BB gun.
Some had high-pitched barely audible screams
Which they made with jaws wide open. Others dropped
Without a sign. Why did I want them dead?

I remember the sight of them, how it was
Loathsome: lumps of dark flesh hanging from the wall,
Most of them rabid, I believed, things
Dangerous to have alive, and above all
Ugly, waking nightmares, although now,
When I remember the scene, as again
And again I do, the bats like warmblooded angels
Unfold themselves with supple intricate wings,
With little cries of anguish, and no more
Can they frighten me, not now, not the bats.

—Brooks Haxton



Expressing Joy

Conrad McKethan

The Road to the Future

Joe Tuddburn sat on an old apple crate in his one room apartment, looking at the items in one of many large cardboard boxes that filled the room. This particular box contained a fork, two plastic coffee cups, eight badly-worn magazines, and six matchbooks. The cover of one of the matchbooks said, in large brown letters, "EAT AT THE HENDERSON DINER."

"OK," thought Joe Tuddburn.

* * *

Gregory, one of the six, highly exalted Architects of Tomorrow, sat at his desk. He was wearing only his long white robe, which flowed gently down from his neck until it came to rest quietly upon his ankles. Robes of this sort were the traditional garment of the Architects of Tomorrow, though they each wore a different color. Gregory had always been slightly envious of Daniel, who had been granted the purple robe for his work on the Toaster of the Future.

At the moment, Gregory was busy designing the Toilet Paper of the Future, but it wasn't working as well as he'd hoped it would.

* * *

Elizabeth sat on the edge of the bed, carefully maneuvering a golden brush through her long, shiny hair, of redness surpassing even the spiciest of spaghetti sauce.

When she was almost ready to leave, she gently prodded Daniel, who was still asleep beneath the covers.

"You'd better wake up and get to work on the Disposable Drinking Cup Dispenser of the Future," she said.

Elizabeth quietly locked the door behind her, and took a bus to the Henderson Diner, where she worked as a waitress.

* * *

The Emperor of the Universe sat on his throne, which in many ways resembled a toilet, and examined the blueprints he had just received. It was a plan for the Shopping Center of the Future. He couldn't decide who to contract the job out to.

"Perhaps I'll give it to the Mulhoney brothers," thought the Emperor. "They usually do good work."

* * *

Frederick and Alexander sat side by side in the last car of the subway, quietly discussing their plans for the City of the Future. They were on their way to the Henderson Diner, where they were to meet the other Architects of Tomorrow, to discuss the overall design for Life in the Future. They enjoyed travelling together, because Alexander's green robe clashed so badly with Frederick's orange one.

* * *

Joe Tuddburn sat on the cranberry-red upholstery of a bar stool in the Henderson Diner, and studied the crumbled remains of the piece of chocolate cake he had just consumed. When the waitress behind the counter turned her back, he quietly slipped a salt shaker into his pocket.

* * *

The Architects of Tomorrow sat on six bar stools in the Henderson Diner. They all ordered jelly donuts, except Benjamin, the youngest, who ordered a raisin bun.

"Now then," said Herbert, brushing donut crumbs off his respectable blue robe. "We must get down to the business of designing the Future."

Three gangsters entered the diner. Because they thought that the Architects of Tomorrow were the Mulhoney brothers, who had welched on a contract, they shot them many times with their shiny black machine guns.

And so the Future never got designed.

* * *

Nothing else happened that day.

—Andrew Looney



So, What's Next?

Debbie Barfield

A Grief

(for g)

I do not want to believe
that I will never know you
only knew that you were sick
and held your head up
in your fingers

I saw your gallant flick
leap raw and proud inside
those age-tight sockets
saw your thinness
but mistook it
for meticulous care

I thought that we
would have long talks
that you would fill me
with tested wisdoms
I had not yet need of
you whose well turned laugh
denied the clear edged shock
of the endless morning
we woke in
the arid anguish stuffed
in her room

We both knew well
the coming doom
that stood us together
close
as we watched her die

You can not shade
another withered hour
now from me
your own night tide
we ebbing even then
you did not tell me
how little time remained
with you

The emptied wisps
of the secrets
we never got around
to whispering
disquiets the air
you have freed up

I do not want to be
missing you

—*Valerie Russell*



Continuous Coffee Break

Jeff Jones



Kelly Posey



Waterfall Fantasy

Shawnie Hamburg

Saturday Matinee

You didn't expect to meet a man like Topp Rupp. Chances are, you'd never heard of anyone earning a living like he did. He whirled himself into a blur. And got paid for it.

I probably never would have met him if I hadn't wanted that virgin wool sweater set in the front window of Hinkey's Department Store on High Street. The set was so pretty. A soft, pale blue that went great with my red hair. And two dozen pearly little blue buttons right down the whole front of the cardigan. Well— twenty-six dollars was more than I could have earned in a month of Sundays babysitting. So, when Jeanine Trout's pregnancy by Hoot McPhee started showing too much, her mother made her leave town. Then Ezno Barker, who knew my daddy from the lodge, offered me her job and I took it, because of that sweater set. Topp Rupp was the special attraction between the *Zorro* serial and *The Foreign Legion* a couple of months after I started.

I was seventeen and had never had a real occupation before. Not that running the candy counter at the movie house was much of one, but it was something. I started off at the same pay Shirley Johnson from across the street was getting at the dry cleaner's, and she had been there two years.

It was a great job. Before the main feature, the lobby was always alive and noisy. Light blazed down from two heavy chandeliers. Money rattled. The wide doors whooshed open and closed, letting in the street sounds in broken pieces. People chattered and babies cried. Leaving my candy counter, teenage boys would juggle bags of popcorn and wax cups of syrupy cola. Their dates— usually girls I knew from school— would flutter and coo beside them. "Hi, Adele," they'd say, and give me a little wave. I wanted to laugh. Now I knew what it looked like from this side of the counter. "Hi, Jeanine," I used to say to Jeanine Trout, and wave. Naming names proved you knew people, that you got out and around. It was almost like part of my job to name them back. "Hi, Rhonda," I'd say.

Once the feature started, I'd clean up the mess from the rush. When that was done, I was allowed to slip into the theater and watch the show. I could easily get back to the counter if somebody got up for something. It wasn't so easy at Saturday matinees because kids have hollow legs, but I'd manage.

At that time, a theater manager like Ezno had another job on Saturdays besides waddling up and down the aisles with a flashlight stopping kids from necking or fighting or putting their feet up on the seats. He was master of ceremonies for the door prize drawings and for whatever the live, special attraction was. Movie singers or cartoon voices or something like that would travel

the movie circuit and perform between shows or between the short feature and the main one. Well, Topp Rupp was one of them. He had been a bit player in *Mirage at Khalitoum* and *Song of the Sands* and a couple of other movies. It was in *Mirage at Khalitoum* that he had started doing what he got to be famous for.

He could stand in one spot and start spinning and get going so fast you couldn't tell it was a man anymore. Most people, when they'd see him in person, remembered seeing him in a lot of eastern dance scenes. He was born Joseph Rupp, but he was called by his stage name, Topp. How I found this out was by carrying a big mop bucket to the little dressing room in the area behind the movie screen.

Ezno had caught me when I came stomping in, brushing all the snow from the coat Mother and Daddy had bought me for Christmas. It was snowing so hard, it was soaking wet just walking the two blocks from our house. I loved that coat. It was pale green and kind of flared out. It reminded me of one of Audrey Hepburn's.

Ezno stuck his bald head around the door to the little office behind the ticket booth.

"When you get your stuff in your locker, take this bucket backstage to Mr. Rupp." He thrust a seven gallon, galvanized bucket out at me.

"What's it for?" I asked, looking into it and fiddling with my damp hair, which I was wearing in a poodle cut that year. It was a big style, but my folks didn't like it. Mother didn't say anything, just rolled her green eyes; but Daddy laid newspapers on the front room floor and told me to use them if I couldn't make it outside in time.

When I knocked on the dressing room door, a hoarse voice said, "Come in if you must."

If you want this bucket, I must, I thought, twisting the cold white doorknob.

His voice had been so hoarse I had half-expected to see him slumped in the old easy chair Ezno put back there, and to have his neck wrapped in yards and yards of Vicks-soaked flannel. What I had not expected was to see him standing there in pig-patterned boxer shorts and navy blue socks kept up by garters, and not a stitch more.

Now, even though I was barely seventeen, I did not turn and run. At school last year I had been in the play *I Remember Mama* with only a sheet strung across the classroom dressing room to separate the actors from the actresses. During dress rehearsal that sheet had fallen and Minnie Oliver, who was playing my daughter Katrin, had started us all squealing. Miss Rice came racing from the auditorium and bawled us all out. She called our behavior unprofessional.

"If this should occur during your performances, you are to take no notice," she said. "Why, once, for the Willow Spring Players, I was required to change my complete attire in thirty seconds. I did it in the wings, with half the cast present and looking on."

She was wearing a pink silk blouse with a high collar and she swiveled her head around at each of us like an arthritic person in a neck brace. "I can assure

you," she said, "only professional attention was paid by those cast members. That is the way we—" and she swiveled her head back around—"do it in the theater."

"So where do you want the bucket?" I asked the man, staring right at him but not noticing anymore than I had to.

"Anywhere will do," he said in his stage voice. From the big brown chair, he picked up a pair of white stretch pants with sewn-on stirrups.

I knew I should go, but I was positive those pigs on his shorts were going to show through and I was trying to decide whether to tell him or not. And if I did, *how*. Before I could make up my mind, he reached out and—almost as soft as a feather—touched my arm.

"I'm Joseph 'Topp' Rupp," he said. On the *Topp*, he had moved the second and third fingers on both hands up and down like everybody does now when they're telling you quotation marks, but that was the first time I had ever seen it. "May I have your name?"

"Adele Hartstock." I was thinking that the way he put his sentences together sounded a lot like Miss Rice. Maybe he knew her, I thought. But I wasn't going to ask. I wasn't going to ask because he was looking at me like he was ready to ask *me* something. He had little yellowish eyes that seemed to wiggle in his pale face.

At last, he did ask me something. "Do you work here?"

"Yes, I do. At the candy counter. Can I get something else?"

"No. Just the bucket."

By this time, I was starting to have some trouble with the not-noticing part. That room was about the size of our kitchen pantry. He might be a professional, but I was convinced by now that I was not.

"Well," I said and groped behind me for the knob on the door that had swung to when I had set the bucket down.

"Are you related to Mr. Barker? His sister? Or his wife, perhaps?"

"Ezno? *No*." I snickered at the very idea.

Well, that set him off. "Eznono," he repeated—the same quick way I had answered, and we both laughed. "Eznono," he said again, laughing.

He had a nice laugh. Because he wasn't afraid to laugh. He laughed out loud and his whole face laughed too. His queer yellow eyes wiggled up and down. A lock of hair fell onto his forehead and his teeth showed in his narrow mouth. His hair was crayola black and his teeth were even and white. I had been thinking he was middle-aged, forty or forty-five, maybe. But when he laughed, I could see he was a lot younger, probably not even thirty. All of a sudden, I felt daring and flirtatious.

"You're naked," I said. I pointed at his pig shorts.

"Oh, my Lord, I am," he said, and pulled the stretch pants in front of him, darting back and forth, trying to duck behind them. Two bright circles of red showed up on his pale face and his laugh changed into a short, spurdy, embarrassed one. "Oh, Lord. I mean, I knew I wasn't in costume, but—Oh, I'm sorry. I-I get stage fright; can you believe it? I—"

I broke him off. He really looked sad. "It's okay," I told him. "It's okay." I

patted my hand into the air, trying to calm him down. As he quieted and began to just look at me again, I said, "I'd tell you to pull on your pants, but I think you should know— those pigs are bound to show through."

He grinned and nodded. "I know."

"Good," I said and turned around to leave.

"Adele, will you be able to watch my performance?"

I said, "Probably. hardly anybody ever gets up during the special attraction."

I twisted the knob and pulled the door open. The only light back there was the bulb hanging on a chain in his dinky dressing room. I stopped in the doorway. I didn't turn back around. "Hey," I said, "on Saturdays my daddy makes a big pot of chili for the guys he works with at the firehouse. They come by all day. There's always plenty. I thought if you had to stay in town after the show— "

"Thank you. I would like that very much."

"Yeah, well then, I'll wait for you at the candy counter."

Ezno was pulling aside the door curtain separating the lobby from the theater when I got to the top of the aisle.

"I was just coming to get you," he said. "I'm fixing to open." He tilted his head toward the screen. "Is he all right? He gets stage fright, you know."

"Yeah, I know," I said and moved past him into the glare of the lobby.

I still think people who have never seen a human top before have sure missed something. It's hard to believe a person can get to spinning so fast.

As usual, the theater was full— except for the balcony and the crying room which Ezno closed for Saturday matinees. At fifty cents for almost three hours— thirty-five for the ticket and fifteen to spend— the Strand was the cheapest babysitting outfit in town.

After the new *Zorro* episode, Ezno brought up the house lights. He reminded everybody that the candy counter was open the whole movie. Two kids got up but sat back down when he said for everybody to get out their ticket stubs for the weekly drawing. The prize was an official Wilson basketball from Hinkey's toy department. Shirley Johnson's kid sister Alice won and Ezno whispered into the P.A. system that Hinkey said girls could swap for a Tiny Tears outfit. Alice said no thank you. Then Ezno gave away two free movie passes from stubs.

While he was doing this, you could see the long maroon curtain flapping out as Topp Rupp walked between it and the movie screen to get to the center of the stage. Just below the curtain, I could see that his stretch pants tucked into soft, white, leather ballerina slippers.

Then Ezno flipped a switch and some dreamy music came from the phonograph and two extra speakers at the right side of the stage. When Ezno raised his arm, Carl Rigsby, the projectionist, turned on a heavy spot lamp he had wheeled into the center aisle. Ezno smoothed his pudgy hand down the wall and across the house switches. He announced Topp Rupp— told what movies he'd been in, said he was originally from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and was now from Hollywood, California. All the kids cheered and cheered at that. Now he moved his face right up to the microphone stand and boomed, "Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, for your edification and entertainment, the

world's fastest spinning human, the one— the only— *Topp Rupp!*"

Through the curtain he came, the kids shouting and screaming in the dark. Above his white slippers and pants was a full, long sleeved, white satin shirt. Bright blue, yellow, and red stripes of different widths circled it. His face was covered with heavy powder that almost made his skin match his pants. Except for his lips. They were a thick red slash in his face and could be easily seen all the way at the back of the theater where I was.

By now, the phonograph was playing a wild mix of music from one of his eastern dance scenes at full volume. The crackling speakers on the stage poured out loud sounds of hand-beaten drums and finger cymbals, tambourines, and a high-pitched flute. With no attention at all to the rhythm of this racket, Topp Rupp fixed his eyes on a spot about half-way up the back wall and started pumping against the stage boards with his right foot. Just like you'd start pumping a playground merry-go-round. In no time at all, he got to spinning. What amazed me was that he didn't stand up on his toe tips, he just raised his left heel a little and let the ball of his foot do all the work. Around and around he went. Faster and faster. Around and around, faster, faster. In the bright spotlight, he flashed. He held his arms high. The stripes in his shirt turned to one cone of twirling color. Around, around.

Then— just like he had slammed on a brake— he stopped.

And then, without much of a pause, he squatted low, shifted the weight to his right foot, pumped with his left. There he went again. This time he moved up and down as well as around. The kids hooted and clapped.

How long he spun, I can't say for sure. It seemed like a long, long time. I don't know. He had taken time itself up there with him and he spun it into his act. After the first couple of minutes or so, when I had stopped wondering how he did it, when I got caught up in the rhythm of the man bobbing up and down as he turned in the fastest circles I'd ever seen, I didn't think about much at all. Just watched. Even the kids stopped cheering. Just watched. The record went off. Still he spun. From where I stood at the back with the darkness all around me and the hot white circle of light with its spinning center looking only about three inches high, he seemed locked into place, eternal. And I watched that blackness all around and the white point of light with one man whirling himself into a blur at its center. He was one ceaseless moment of pure, focused energy. Thinking back on it now still gives me the shivers.

At last he braked again. This time he dropped down into a jackknife split, bounded up, and was gone. He had raced through the slit in the panel and was running behind them, fumbling against them, making the whole curtain shake wildly.

The kids were hollering again, *yay, yay*, and starting toward me in droves.

I had never seen kids put away food like they did that day. Ezno had to come behind the counter and help me. We sold all the Necco Wafers and Dots he had in stock. We sold a dozen boxes of candy bars and the whole case of popcorn. Not one of those kids at that matinee could've seen even half the main feature. Ezno must have hollered over at me ten times, "He's great, isn't he?" and I'd nod and fill the cup or hand a bag of popcorn over the counter.

"It was this crazy when he came a couple of years ago, too," he called to me. "Sure wish I could get him more often."

I nodded. I was glad we were so busy. I didn't want to talk about Topp Rupp with Ezno. Now that I'd seen him perform, my head fairly tumbled with questions. *What do you think about when you're in such a whirl? How do you decide to do something like that for a living? Where do you learn it? Can you do it when you're old? Don't your shoes get holes in them? Do you like to do it? Don't you ever fall off the stage?*

Seemed like that movie house would never empty out that day. But it did. And there he was. Ezno had cleared the register for me and I was wiping the finger smudges off the last case. He had on a light topcoat and wore a brown fedora pulled at a low angle over his wiggly yellow eyes. He had taken off the face powder but all the lipstick hadn't come off. Traces of it edged his lip line. From my side of the counter, even with a sudsy rag in my hand, I could catch a faint smell of Pond's cold cream. He carried a large, wet, black leather suitcase with fat straps and buckles. It must've been back in the dressing room, but I hadn't seen it.

"Just a second," I said. He stood there without talking, hanging on to that suitcase while I put away the cleaning stuff and got my coat and gloves from my locker. If Ezno was surprised when we marched past the office and out the door together, he didn't let on.

"Just a couple blocks this way," I said. "That your costume in that bag?"

"Yes, it is," he said.

The sky was a steely blue. It had stopped snowing, but the air was full of snow smells and sounds. Frozen crystals crunched under our feet and I could taste a tangy coldness in the back of my nose and throat. I would have talked more, maybe even asked some of those questions, except Topp Rupp walked with his head down, looking real intent on where he put his feet. At the corner, where we turned on to my street— Willow— he said, "I'm really not too hungry. I'm afraid I'm going home with you under false pretenses." He looked at me sideways. "I simply couldn't conceive of sitting alone at the bus station, knowing that I could be with you instead."

I stopped a second and looked at him. "How old are you?" I asked.

"Twenty-eight, twenty-nine next month," he answered. "Why? Your parents?"

I nodded. "Well, my daddy. He might, or might not, have conniption fits." I tugged at his sleeve. "But I don't care. He likes tripping over his bottom lip about everybody I bring home."

Mother took our wet coats and hung them on hangers on the back of the bathroom door. She brought a towel back with her and set his suitcase to drip dry next to the floor register in the hall. I waited until we were all in the front room before I did the introductions.

Mother said, "Pleased to meet you, Mr. Rupp," in the telephone voice that she also used for company.

Daddy was sitting by the radio with Mr. Evans. A boxing match was going full blast. They had the big orange ashtray on a stand, full of Camel cigarette

butts. Their dirty chili bowls and beer bottles covered a card table. I didn't know what kind of houses Topp Rupp was used to, but nobody at mine was going to apologize for it looking lived in.

Daddy pumped Topp Rupp's arm up and down, really giving him the once-over. "The movie circuit, huh? I see, I see." He was trying to sound hearty. I don't know what else he would've said because it was then that the voice on the radio got even louder.

"Oh, oh, he's in trouble, ladies and gentlemen. That's the third left to that jaw he's taken. He's— "

Daddy cocked his ear at the machine. "Follow boxing?" he asked Topp Rupp in a distracted voice.

"No sir," the man who was used to being the special attraction himself replied.

Daddy bobbed his head, turned to the radio and Mr. Evans. "He down, Will?"

I moved to the heavy swinging door that led to the kitchen, wiggling my finger for Topp Rupp to follow. Mother was already there. She had dished out two cereal bowls of chili. She pried a cap from a Ballantine, took a big swallow, and headed for the front room. "Sorry, you all. I was listening to the fight."

The bowls sat on the breakfast bar Daddy had built in the Spring. Topp Rupp sidled up on a chrome stool and looked down into his bowl like he'd never seen chili before. I looked too. Pinto beans, little chunks of green pepper and onion, pulpy tomato and brown hamburger, all coated over with a barely noticeable film of grease with dark specks of chili powder in it. What was he expecting? I wondered.

"I can't," he said and shoved the bowl away. Thick red sauce sloshed onto the counter. He raced to the plastic trash can next to the refrigerator, ripped off the white lattice top, and threw up all over the onion peels and pepper seeds.

I didn't know what to do. I'd only thrown up once before in my life— when I had eaten a spoiled bologna sandwich at Shirley's house. I had made it to the bathroom. Nobody knew about it until it was over.

"I'll get Mother," I offered and climbed off my own stool.

"No!" he said, drawing his head back some and waving his arm in the air.

"But— "

"No. Please." He was coughing and gagging. I ran to the sink and wet the dish towel with cold water. From first aid, all I could remember was cold compresses. I reached around him, trying to press it on his forehead.

He was through. Now he just had little coughs. He took the towel out of my hand and wiped his face with it. He pressed his back against the ice box. His head and shoulders were slumped.

"Are you all right?" I asked him, taking the towel out of his hand and tossing it into the garbage.

"Believe me, Adele," he said, his head still down, "had I known I would have to do that again today, I never would have come here."

I was at the sink getting another dish towel. "Do what again?" I wrung the water out.

"Regurgitate."

"What?"

"Vomit."

"Oh. Oh. You're sick! I *thought* you were awful pale. I— "

"I'm not sick," he said, looking up at me. He took the fresh towel and wiped his face. He walked over to the sink and swilled his mouth with water. He rinsed and rinsed the sink. Then he pushed against its edge with both hands and stared out the window past the bird feeding tray. "I'm not sick the way you mean— sick from disease or something I ate."

"You're sick from your act?" I moved up beside him. "From whipping yourself into those circles?" Now there was a stale sweetish smell with the cold cream. I rubbed my hand up and down on his arm. It felt skinny and cold through his pin-stripe shirt.

"The whole thing frightens me to death. Didn't Mr. Barker tell you?"

"You told me yourself you get stage fright."

"I mean about the bucket. How I have to— how, after every performance— about the bucket you brought to me backstage— "

"Ezno just said to bring it to you. Why? What's it for?"

"What is it for? What is it for?" He turned and gripped my upper arm. His yellow eyes bobbed up and down. "It is for me to spill my guts into day after day. That is what it is for. It is for me to pour out everything I have taken in since the day before." His hoarse voice was starting to get loud and I didn't want Mother and Daddy to come into the kitchen to see if something was wrong. Anyway— what would I have told them? I wasn't sure I knew what he was talking about.

So I kissed him. I reached right in and put my arms around him and kissed him. There really wasn't any taste of the vomit.

He had the softest lips. Soft, warm pads, open just a little bit. He pulled me closer, wrapping his arms around me like I was the last person he was ever going to see. He kissed me carefully, softly, moving from my lips to my cheeks, my eyelids, down my throat. He turned me gently, pressing me against the cool sink and pressing his warm body against mine. We swayed. He was so skinny, so narrow-chested, I could feel his heart pump. He pushed hip and thigh against me. My head rushed, legs trembled. I pressed into him, pressed. I half-opened my eyes, focusing on bright spangles of light glinting in the air. My breath shook. My eyes closed. I thought briefly of the pantry.

But, well, it was hopeless. That radio boxer wasn't going to keep getting up, those beer bottles weren't going to have beer in them forever. We both knew it. And when I showed the first sign of alarm at a noise I thought I heard, he stepped back. But not like he was abandoning me— he still rested one hand on my hip.

"Your parents," he said.

I wagged my head yes. It felt loose and strange.

"Well, I knew that when I came here." He raised his shoulder and stretched out his free arm. A watch with a slender gold band appeared from beneath his cuff. He looked from the watch to me.

"It's getting too dark for you to walk with me all the way to the station, but would it be too much to prevail upon you to accompany me to the main corner?"

"Why, I'll go to the depot with you," I said, I held his arm with both hands.

"It would not be safe for you. I prefer it this way. It would not be safe for you. Just to the corner. I insist."

I took a minute to gather myself together. I dumped the chili into the waste basket and carried it to the garbage can on the back step. Then we passed through to the front room. An Ernest Tubbs song blared from the radio. Mother, Daddy, and Mr. Evans glanced up. They were at the card table. Daddy was stacking poker chips and Mr. Evans was shuffling. Mother stood and asked, "Anybody want more beer?"

"Thank you for your hospitality."

Daddy said, "Going so soon?"

"He's leaving town," I said.

That seemed to satisfy Daddy, because all he said was, "Oh."

Topp Rupp was right. It was only five o'clock or so, but it was getting dark. Some windows on our street were warm yellow squares of light with shadows of people in them. Others already had their shades pulled. The corner we were headed for had a street lamp that made a little halo on the sidewalk.

I tucked my hand into Topp Rupp's. "Where are you going?"

"Just outside Charsburg tonight. Monday I head back to California. I begin a new film next week."

When he said *film*, I was reminded all of a sudden that he was a movie star. A real movie star. Joseph "Topp" Rupp. "I didn't know movie stars rode on Trailways buses," I said.

He squeezed my hand. "I *perform*, I do not star— there is a big difference. And, about the bus," he laughed, "sometimes we take Greyhound."

I said, "People like you. They like to watch you. It won't be long before you're a star."

We were almost to the corner— thirty feet or so. I knew that no matter how much I wished, I wouldn't be able to follow him any further. Even if I went all the way to the depot, that would be it. That's the way it was. And I still had all those questions. All those questions and more. For some reason, I was starting to feel panicky knowing that I'd never know all the answers. It was really silly. I was wanting to stop him, to grab his shoulders and shake him. Shake him there on my street. *Tell me all the answers.* I wanted to shout. *Tell me all the answers. How can you get out there everyday and spin for all those people if it makes you so sick? What do you think about? Why do you care? Why do I like you so much? Do you like me? Tell me all the questions.*

At the corner, inside the soft circle of light, he leaned toward me and gave me a quick peck on the forehead. "Adele," he said, and left. It was as sudden as his putting on the brake in his act. I turned around as fast as I could and looked down my own empty and familiar street. I really wanted to watch him walk away, but all I could think about was how he fumbled with that curtain.

—Dawnelle Loiselle



Betsy Anthony



Robert Marcum

Dream for Tía Cuca

Last night as you lay
on the narrow bed, twenty years
dead, I tried to wake you,
speaking softly, persistently,
until my words were like hands
reaching deep into your innocent
mind. You had aged in death.

In this house the family
watched each other as in a wake
but I remembered you
as tenaciously alive. I talked
you a slow awakening, and you
walked without help, but
couldn't find anything.

*It's the wrong house, I told you,
we keep moving, changing,
and you can't keep up,
left behind like so much death.
They say your spirit walked
the houses, but if so
why are you lost?*

We are all watching each other
and maybe you too watch me
as I move on alone towards women,
many babies and a large nourishing bed
where I prove myself generous.
Cuca, are you walking this space
between the bountiful bed

and the walls breathing windows,
are you watching the shape
of your face emerge in my own?
As I grow older I can see you in my eyes,
my forehead, something in the chin,
as you walk the background
of this stark and spoken mirror.

—*Yolanda Mancilla*



Togetherness

David Waldman

Aura

We have just left Aura singing
awash on a raft of white sheets.
When we came she was propped
in her wheelchair cawing
like a white bird with broke wings,
blinking and chirping, nervous,
unsure of her keepers.

When she saw us walk through the door,
she quieted like a child
who has finally woken her parents
and now must say there is nothing
wrong, only a dream that scared her
only a fear of forever being alone.
But she was blind without her glasses

that lay unfolded in her lap,
and so she quieted to hear us
whispering her name
as if through the weave
of a bamboo cage to a bird
so exotic and delicate
we were afraid she might fly away.

—*Michael Collier*

Ice

It rained during the night and
got cold enough to freeze.
Everything has a layer of ice.
The trees stand stiff and outlined.
Birds are frozen to the branches.

The sun reminds me of
the light on the dentist's chair.
I remember staring into that light
and seeing the reflection of my mouth.

When he gave me
the anesthetic,
I stood above his shoulder and stared
into a mouth that was not my mouth.

I'm thinking about how it felt
in the car on the way back.
I was motionless but
moving in the frozen morning.

I'm thinking about
how everything is glazed over,
and how it would look if
all but the ice went away.

—*Richard M. Connor*

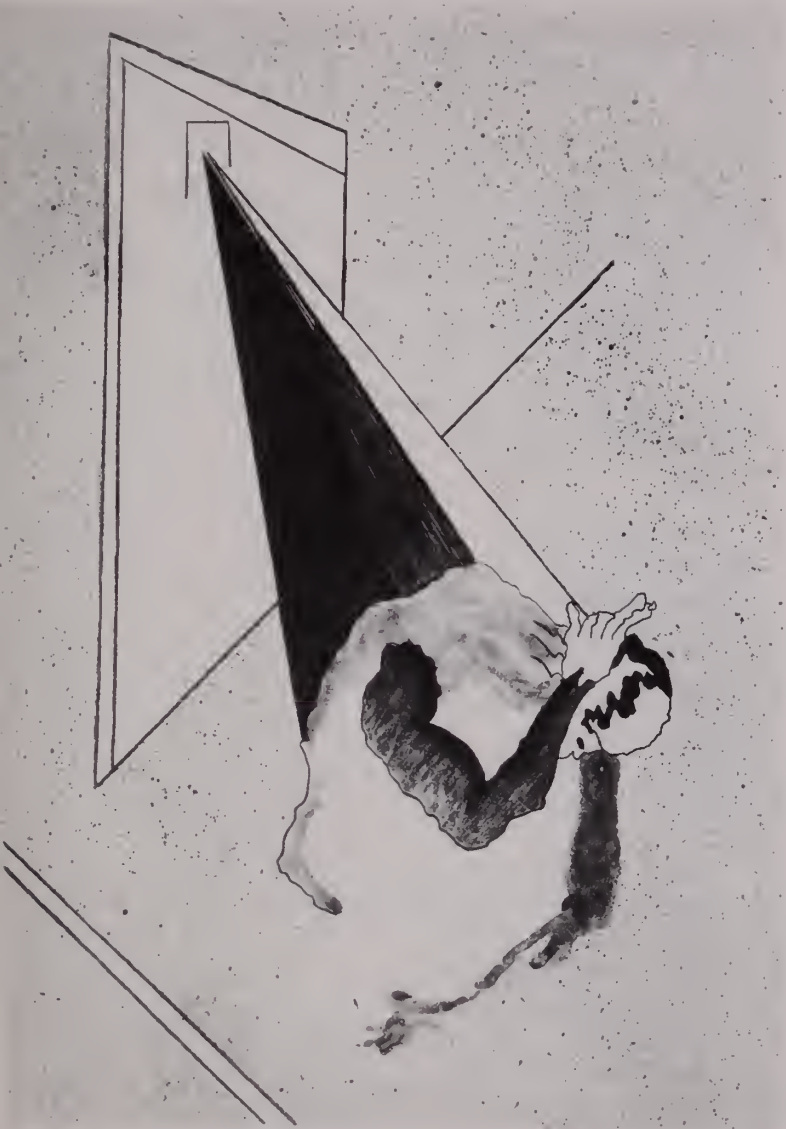


Ray Smith

Encounter

You have unwrapped
the present
Ripped off the glitter
tore open the box
And spilt me
all over the cold
Cement floor where
the indentation of
My backbone remains
A fossil for others
to find and
Ponder.

—*Megan Gray Taylor*



Caren Sachs

Clinging to Frog then a Bridge

I can feel this bridge shake
as if it wants me off.
And I just hold on
to railings that wouldn't
stop a small wind from falling.

I am looking for frogs or a leap,
something small that looks like dirt
but jumps.

I can see frogs leap into
water shaded by bridge.
And then they look like water
or water with small wind ripples.

I can feel wind come after me.
I just chisel my chin in
and hold on, looking at dirt
or where the frogs jump.

This is crawling.
This is finding a snake in your gut
when it must be frog.
This is needing to crawl
when you want leap.
Finding a leap, then wind,
then falling. Then again
crawling.

I am looking at creek edge
where the frogs jump for cover
and I need to leap
and, shaking, hold on to a small wind.

I can push my hand into mud
reaching where frogs leap
and find a frog
like the wind finds me.

I can feel, in my hand, a frog shake
as if it wants me off
but I just hold on
to what I need
like a bridge that is falling
but holding on.

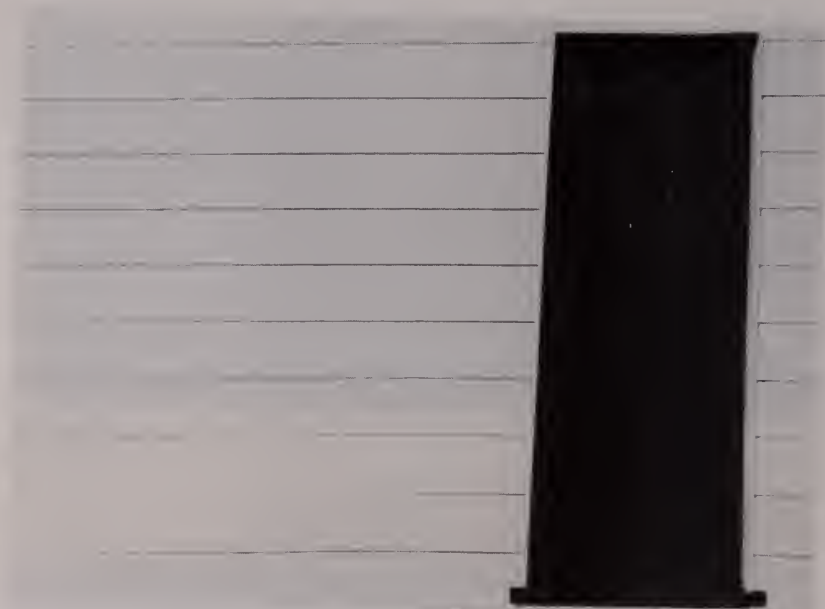
—*Tom White*



Roberta Duncan



Mark Stein



Shawnie Hamburg

Sheep

My eyes, two tiered nets, spread across the room
Catch sheep, that fly and swim
Through the air and rugs
Leaving secret meanings in neat little piles
Of wool and hay in the corner of my room.

Traps are set to snare the beasts but they
Shy away from plates of lambchops set for them.
I haven't slept for seven nights and still they come
By the dozen.
My room shrinks in the face of this siege.

I need to know their secrets.

I held one once for an hour.
In its silence I learned of grain and wood
Of fields and forks of different rivers merging into one branch
How the sun turns water yellow like winter leaves
Dying in the grass.

The sheep vanished as I fell asleep.

The next one I catch I'll cook for breakfast
With apples and onions.
Before I'm done I'll know this sheep inside out
It will know me well.

My nets have gaps.
They charge, ram, breakdown walls, hoping to catch
The next bank of clouds drifting away.
Some meander from me through the holes that others make.
I am here waiting for sheep

—Roger Hecht

Song

who is this man
they call his name

it rains
the sound of european trenches

beneath the aching of grasses
green

who is this twin
that touches the street

and walks
who whispers like candles

and stills the aged faces
grey

we know this much
we who look away

who dance to be young
in a dark field of crosses white

o he has been a soldier

and now it rains

—*Kurt Kuss*



Robert Marcum

Hide-And-Go-Seek

Each day sings the name
of that place you want to be,
but nothing can force this breath home.
Still, damp earth breathes me back,
I'm counting in a neighbor's yard where the game starts
and none of us wants to be it
in dark that ready-or-not
floods the space my eyes once were.

One hundred breaths later,
I turn to the silence of that first step out.
Sweat startles my forehead
with a false start I make toward some figure
I thought moved but was only
the stir of grass in all that green.

Past white paint peeling warm front porch lights
I see now whose shadow moves quick
to the count of an in-free call going out
deeper than the darkness here where only nothing really is.

—*S. Thomas Layesman*



David Waldman

Getting My Deer

(for my father)

With the leaves' fall, I slip
my rifle's bolt in oil until I cannot
feel the metal pull against itself.
Steel will not warp like wood left
in the rain, or the skin of children
as they grow old. Dry beneath
my feet, the twigs crack and call
each step I make, but if I watch
the ground a deer is only the scatter
of leaves to its escape. So I watch
the spaces between the trees, the rocks,
and leaves and know that seeing is
a gesture of the sun breaking
a stone or antler from shadow.
When the sky slides across
the forest floor, the day is poised
brittle on leaves, ready to
scatter.

Last deer felled, shot through
the neck because its heart sets
too deep in its chest for me to hope
the shot will not just pass
through flesh. Pinned for an instant
in air by mid-leap muscle, the deer
recalled to blood and earth, did not turn
to see me watching for its fall,
it did not matter. I owed it
now to carry through, to splice
its legs together with rope
and string it from the trees; its guts
still warm in a way that fire
could never be.

Listen, I sleep on ground that's
killed its grass and tightened
into rock. In the morning when
the roads shake off their spume under
trucks that move on to cities to leave
their loads, I rise, and gather
my gear. I make coffee. The forest
is the same whether I come or go.
I pack the tent; walk deeper
into woods. And I have not
seen a deer in twenty years.

—*Laura Dickinson*



Stephen Young



Stephen Young

Randy

Who can recall the particulars of passion? Slowly, I have learned I enter into desire the same with any man. It's my body after all. Still, I can remember the first time Randy kissed me; the fullness of his lips, the narrow tip of his tongue. I was not afraid at first to write about him. To remember him I thought about the day before the day before but found there was no context. Without him there were only the words I fear most alone I can not begin it.

In the beginning, I want to say something about the images. They are in the air. Listen. I want to say I am in the center of a fall reaching in all directions down. I can remember writing lies in my diary, can only be certain of details: the blue shadow cast by headlights, a slight swelling at the back of my tongue. I can almost feel his hands on me. In the beginning. . .

There was no normal beginning. Before Randy I was thirteen. In the front yard, under pine trees, I wore short shorts and lined my eyes with blue shadows. Down by Shaker Lake, where the boys are.

Listen, who can recall the particulars of passion? I wait while others speak. When I was a girl, I want to say, I liked a boy. Any boy, for a while. I liked a boy to brag about. Still, I remember the first time Randy kissed me.

He had on a blue shirt with the top button undone. The thin white edge of his finger nails were neatly trimmed. His hands were tan. He touched my face and turned me toward him. I could feel his breath on my cheek, the pressure of his thumb. His fingers mixed into the shadow shapes of trees. Finally, I could feel him lift my chin. My head was braced by his arm. I let go, felt the fullness of his lips, the narrow tip of his tongue moving into and out of my mouth.

Sure I'd been kissed before— at the front door goodnight or in the movies after popcorn, but when he kissed me narrow shadows of his fingers moved over me. We were in the back seat while Wayne drove faster. I wasn't ready. I was watching Wayne put his arm around another girl. Wayne's elbow was skinny. He had a pack of Marlboros rolled into the sleeve of his t-shirt.

Later, Randy said yes, it was his idea. Randy had planned the whole thing. Because I was Wayne's girl before that night. We'd been fighting. No, I didn't care that much for Wayne but the thought that I had hurt him and could make it up to him had appealed to my imagination. And that night I waltzed out when Wayne arrived. I was smiling. I remember.

I was barefoot under the pines in the front yard, in the half light. I was watching my feet as I walked. I was almost shy, swinging my white sandals by their

straps, and I never saw that other girl. Not until I reached for the handle of the car door.

A red head. She was Nadine, Wayne told me. He was nervous. Sliding in behind the wheel, he couldn't look at me straight for laughing.

But not Randy in the back seat, waiting. No, he didn't flinch. When he spoke to me it was as if we had already been talking. He had dark, close eyes and high cheek bones and he was taller. Even sitting in the car, I could see how tall he was.

Later, he said yes. The shadow shapes of trees moving fast as we drove faster. And I should not waste my time, he said, being angry with Wayne.

I was not ready for the fullness of his lips. I could feel him lift my chin. "Forgive me," he said, "since it was all my crazy idea anyway." And he liked my hair long, he said. The narrow tip of his tongue moving into and out of my mouth.

II

Randolf Charles Kett, was a five foot ten inch, one hundred and fifty pound, fourteen-year old boy of upper-middle class background. His father was a history teacher and his mother a nurse. He grew up on World War Two stories, smiled too much, and disliked authority. He wore gnat shirts and liked to surf, fist fight, and to come see me every single summer afternoon.

It was the year the palm tree finally grew tall enough to touch my window. I could hear the fronds scratch at the glass. I had to arch my back to stop Randy from kissing me. His fingers were on the inside of my blouse. I tried to slip from underneath him, but felt the muscle of his arm tighten. Just for a moment he held me, then lifted himself away.

I felt a dry heat color my cheeks and neck. I was afraid at first to speak and laughed instead. Randy looked out the window, then back at me. I said, "Do you want to go for a walk or something?"

He said, "No."

I said, "Look Randy, we've got to think of something else to do."

He said, "I was happy doing just what we were doing. Weren't you?"

"How about cooking something?" I asked. "We could make brownies."

He shook his head and kissed me again.

"But listen," I said, as I leaned back into his arms, "don't touch me anymore. You know I can't let you touch me like that, so why do you keep trying?"

He smiled at me. "I try to touch you," he said and stopped to kiss me, sliding his hand inside my blouse and rubbing his thumb on my stomach until I moved; not much, only a little, but I began moving to the rhythm of his hand rubbing

me, "I only touch you," he said, "because you want me to."

Then he quickly grabbed my wrists and pulled my arms out from under me. I fell back onto the bed, laughing as he laid half on top of me. But it was a long time before he tried again to put his hands on me. He would just lay near me and I would move myself up against him, try to get closer.

We kissed so quietly, sometimes I could hear the palm trees press to my window, hear the fronds ruff up the glass, hear the sliding sound of stiff leaves when the wind blew, then spit a thin trickle of rain against the window. I wondered if he would wait for me to ask him, to invite him, to touch me again. I don't remember when, but when one day he finally let his fingers slide up against the fleshy part of my breast, I let myself lean into the palms of his hands.

"Randy is the boy for me, do dah, do dah
the one and only can't you see, oh dee do dah day"

III

Sometimes when I am about to wake up, I can feel the dark thread of my mouth pull open, hear my breath turn backward, and reflecting on the still surface of my sleeping eyes, I can dream his face into my own. . .

If I were a man, if I could have been a boy, could have been Randy leaning up against the car, hands knuckle deep in the pockets of my pants, I would smoke my cigarette slow, draw the smoke deeply into my lungs, and wait.

"What?" I would finally ask them.

One of them pushes his head forward, makes a kissing sound with his lips, opens his mouth wide, and says, "I asked you what you waiting for, boy?"

"Yeah" a couple of others join in. "Yeah, what you doing?"

Five of them. I think about the chain behind the driver seat. The crow bar. I wonder how to reach into the window. When? The tall one moves towards me. One step. "What's your name boy?"

"Randy," I say, "Randy's my name."

"Well, Randy," says the tall one, "We don't want to rush you, you know. So we're going to give you till ten. OK? and if you're not out of here. . ."

"Now" I think, and yell "Mike" while I slide towards the window, reach in, and grab the chain. I am facing them now, waiting for Mike to come. I bend my knees. I can feel the blood pump into my neck. I am balanced on the balls of my feet. I am slowly swinging the chain. When Mike comes out from the store I yell his name again and jump quick into the crowd. They don't expect me, and jump back. All of them. Now. I move with the shadow. Feel a breath of wind scale my spine. Let it go from the knuckle.

"Boy for me, do dah, do dah
the one and only can't you see
Oh dah do dah day"

(Later, in the car, Mike asked Randy what the fight was about. Randy said he didn't know and passed Mike a beer. They went to a spring-fed lake outside town and took a swim. Then Randy said, "Damn, Linda. I was supposed to go see her.")

I can not think of him without remembering myself. Down by Shaker Lake, where leaves make red upon the sand. . . slowly, I have learned I desire the same with any man. We were children, really, when Randy first put his hands on me and grinned. I wanted to drown myself in brown water. Randy chased me over the sand. I ran pulling water back with my hands feeling him grip my ankle. Floating backward, he loosened his fingers and I dove down to where he found me. He pulled me till I stood straight up in front of him. We smiled at each other. With his hands running along my naked waist, he made a low sound somewhere that I searched for with my tongue.

IV

In Florida, after a rainfall, all the bugs come out. In Florida, cockroaches grow to be as big as a small fist, as big as my fist. I take the can of bug spray out from beneath the sink, but I wait until I get outside. From behind the screen door I spray into the house. I use the whole can. And the sound of the bug dying is a low whir. The sound of the bug sliding its abdomen across the linoleum is like the shuffle of my father's slippers. "Hey girl," he says, like he's sorry, "I think we better talk this out."

Because I didn't want to move from Florida, even if my father was sick and out of work. I was happy doing just what I was doing. "Randy, it's like this," I said, "I'm going because I have to go— but I'll be back. I'll be back in less than a year." It was my birthday and Randy had brought me an album. Dion and the Belmonts singing 'Run Around Sue'. "It wasn't my idea," I said. And I remember I could feel that he would miss me; I felt it, and I remember being shy when we said goodbye. I couldn't look at him straight.

I never went to the beach in New York but I bought a child-size wading pool and filled it from the kitchen sink. I spent the whole summer daydreaming on the back landing. Turning in two inches of water; first on my back, then my stomach. The water was like a cool finger tracing the lines of my body. I read

books I didn't fully understand. Tom Jones and Lolita. We were not successful in New York.

We lived above a dentist's office. I could hear sounds from my bedroom floor sometimes. When I arrived home from school, I was alone and I could hear the whine of the dentist's drill mix with the slow rumble of traffic outside my window.

In the projects near our house the basements of all the apartments were connected by locked doors. I met the kids who partied there. Drank sloe gin and performed my southern accent for them. I wasn't as wild in New York as the girls I admired, although I almost got caught shoplifting with my best friend, Dawn Kuchapinsky. She told me no, she was not afraid when the store clerk tapped her on the shoulder. She just yelled my name and we took off running faster.

We liked to watch the boys play pin ball in New York and I never wrote to Randy though I spoke about him often enough to Dawn. "Is this guy for real?" she asked me more than once.

"Sure," I said, but I wasn't exactly. The girl that I remember myself as in New York had little trust in people and was preoccupied with images. I dyed my hair black, wore white lipstick. For a while I went steady with a boy whose hair was the color of sand and for a while with another, but I wasn't scared when my parents said that we were going home. I wasn't afraid to leave New York.

V

It was a lucky break we found the house we did, for next to nothing down and in the old neighborhood. I remember shopping for furniture in the second hand stores, and I was cleaning the stove with a blue soap pad when three of Randy's friends came to the door. Like old times. But Randy, someone said, had a new girl.

"So what," I said, "So what? I've had plenty of boyfriends since I left here and I started smoking too."

So one of his friends offered me a cigarette and says, "Yeah, I bet you learned a lot up there in New York City."

"Sure I learned a lot," I answered him, grinning and taking the cigarette.

"Yeah? Like what?" he asked.

"Wouldn't you like to know," I said and leaned close so he could light my smoke.

"Sure I'd like to," he said, laughing and grabbing for my wrist. But I pulled back.

"Better watch it," I said, "or you might get burned," and I poked the cigarette at him.

"You're all talk girl," one of the others said. "You probably spent the whole year up there all by yourself, pining away. You probably don't know nothing about nothing."

"Know a lot more than you do," I said and took his hand as if I was going to waltz him toward the bedroom. Then we all started laughing. That's how I remember it. We were all laughing so hard, we sat down on the living room floor. Randy drove up then. His father had bought him a car. A little grey sports car.

"Hey, you're just in time!" One of his buddies yelled to him as he walked across the porch. "Linda was just about to show us what she learned up there in New York City."

And I think he must have said show me or something like that. Anyway, he didn't stop at the bedroom door, laughing and winking over his shoulder like the other boys— no, not Randy. He didn't flinch. When he looked at me it was as if I had never left town.

I remember him in details. His narrow eyes and his full lips opening the shadows.

We were making out together on the couch, when Randy said we should. "It's been long enough," he said, "we should do it tonight."

"And what about my husband?" I asked him. "He'll want to marry a virgin, you know."

"Screw your husband," he said.

"But I thought you wanted me to screw you."

"I do, I do," he said as he carried me into the bedroom.

"With my father sleeping in the next room, for god's sake!"

"Forget about your father."

And that Christmas. Under the tree with my whole family celebrating in the next room. We were so quiet my mother thought to ask through the closed door. "Are you still here" she asked. "Yes," I answered her. "Yes," I said, and I remember how I felt it. The inside of my own body. I could feel it and the slow stroking was only a drum beat. The slow stroking was only an echo of my own pulse.

VI

Wait, wait, wait, wait. Waiting for him one time, I whispered the word "wait". Again, "wait". I am waiting. I have waited. Waiting for him I learned to weigh the tension in my chest, control the muscles in my throat. I could pattern my breath and hold when necessary: "Hup,2,3,4". "Speak cautiously," I told myself. "Do not form words without first considering." And in this way I grew closer to myself. Waiting for him I grew closer to the woman I am today. Difficult to imagine me in the narrow room, sitting in the yellow light. These are the memories I can not reach easily. Feeling at first only an irritation, a buzz under the skin growing unbearable, like waking insects inside my thighs. I would have to take a walk. "If Randy comes," I would say to my mother, "tell him I went out to get cigarettes." "Oh, is he late again?", she would ask as I let go of the screen door; listen to it bang once, twice, three times. I don't know where Randy went when he went away from me. But I do know he is not fully imagined until he is imagined gone.

Suppose I had forgotten him and the chance that he would knock on the door. Suppose I had forgotten him then? I was young enough. I remember how often he was late. Can almost remember the longing, almost hear him walk across the porch tiles, see him bending at the door, his head leaning into the light of the room asking, "Go for a ride?"

In the car, Randy tells me he hired on as a diver down the coast last week. He pulls out a bag of loose sea shells, says he found them for me on the bottom of the ocean. I notice they are varnished already, but like that he has taken the trouble to lie.

Randy in daylight— a tall boy with dark glasses. I'd get calls from his friends asking me for dates. That's how I'd find out we were separated. Sometimes I accepted, just to make him jealous; sometimes I accepted just to get drunk. One of his buddies in particular used to tell me what a fool I was. But whenever he tried to touch me, I felt the rum climb back up the sides of my throat.

"You were a son of a bitch, Randy, and now you're dead."

VII

Randy, it's like this. I met another guy, an artist. I don't want anything from you. I was starting college. I took courses in design and color theory. I found out when I was nineteen that I could go barefoot to my art classes. I liked to smear acrylic paint on the thighs of my jeans. "I'm a big girl now," I said to myself, "and I found out there are people I can trust."

That night, when I got into the car, what I actually said was, "You know, Randy, I never understood why you tinted the windshield of your car blue until now."

He said, "Linda, I've joined the army. I've enlisted."

If I thought the sky was weeping with color as I walked from the water up to Randy's car, I decided, once sitting behind the blue glass, that the sky was moaning and the moon was a dark moon. I don't think I said, "I'll miss you." I know I didn't say don't go.

VIII

Randy Randy good, Randy Randy bad. I was against the war. Of course I was against the war. I felt embarrassed when Randy wrote to me from Viet Nam. Because after Randy I was twenty in California. I lived with another man. I. Listen. I want to say something. Not in the half light. Now. I want to say Randolph Charles Kett was a one hundred and eighty pound nineteen year old. . .

"Suppose you've heard," my mother scrawled across the top of the clipping. It read "Tampa boy killed in action". No. His father threw himself onto the grave weeping, she wrote. The funeral was on a wet day. It was predictable. You can set your watch by the rainfall in Florida. No, I had not heard. He was running ammunition up a hill when he was stopped. The article said he was a hero. But Randy was just a boy. Even at nineteen he had a boy's room. A brown plaid bedspread with matching drapes gathered over a desk with a lamp whose shade still had a cowboy painted on it, roping a steer. How often I had laid down on the brown plaid spread and taken him deep inside me, but I never thought to say don't go.

"Young boys when they play soldier
assume the names of stars;
they think they'll never die.

But when they fall into the open streams
Only stones fall with them
They are not able to look up
from the blossoming water;
they are not able to rise."

I can not forget the way he looked at me. I spent one whole summer trying to draw his face. But I could never capture his eyes. They were close in. I want to

say, his eyes were two simple birds opening like flowers onto that dark field. It was sweet when Randy kissed me. It was soft. Under the Oleander trees we would pull in late at night and walk barefoot down to water, warm as air. We would wade waist deep in the bay with phosphorous lighting the lines of our bodies and falling like sparks from our hands, while we stripped and watched our clothes fill with stars and float far away from us.

His name carved in a dark stone.

Suppose he hadn't died. Not really. Suppose he's only gone underground and will reappear one day in my doorway. With an assumed name and a new face, I'll still know him, I thought, by his hips. He had such narrow hips. How I could grip him with my thighs. He should have known I would long to recover him from dark water. . . when daylight fell unsteady and he was stopped— as if in stone.

At thirty five I am restless again. The rain this year is spent with faces I had forgotten. I want to say, who cares to recall the particulars of passion? Still, I have not loved a man since who had such narrow hips. I feel my breath turn backward and I can almost hear how he said to me, "Look, if something should happen, after I'm gone I mean, well— don't just marry anybody." Not Randy. He didn't flinch at killing. "I shot a man today," he once wrote. "I saw his face fall in."

—*Cynthia Matsakis*



Kelly Posey

Where the Earth Comes to Water

Sand shifts. Her feet sink into the soft gritty heat,
the urge, to be saved in shale like a trilobite
to lay eggs turtle-wise, to have some things continue
however they can.

Gulls prophecy over head and prophesizing hear
the sand shiver and fall at every tremor of blood
in the bluesea veins trailed beached seaweed
over the insteps of her feet.

To them this tumbling sand is the billionth generation
of the first mountain that burst the earth's brow
but broke and crumbled back to the lava
upon which it had tried to stand.

The gulls cry over and over against this.
Their age and hers is measured in years, this failed labor
is too old to even calculate. The *need* though, the *will*
are still fresh enough to gather out of her skin

and hatch in warm sands. And hatched and grown
they still might grasp those sands, pull them
into cliffs, peaks, bare foot tracks in mountain snow
Himalayan gorges flooded with cloud

and echoes of wings. She does believe in high holy places
small hollows in a sandstone cliff that's turned its back
on mandreams for the sake of small brown birds
with dull songs, nesting their single eggs in those bowls.

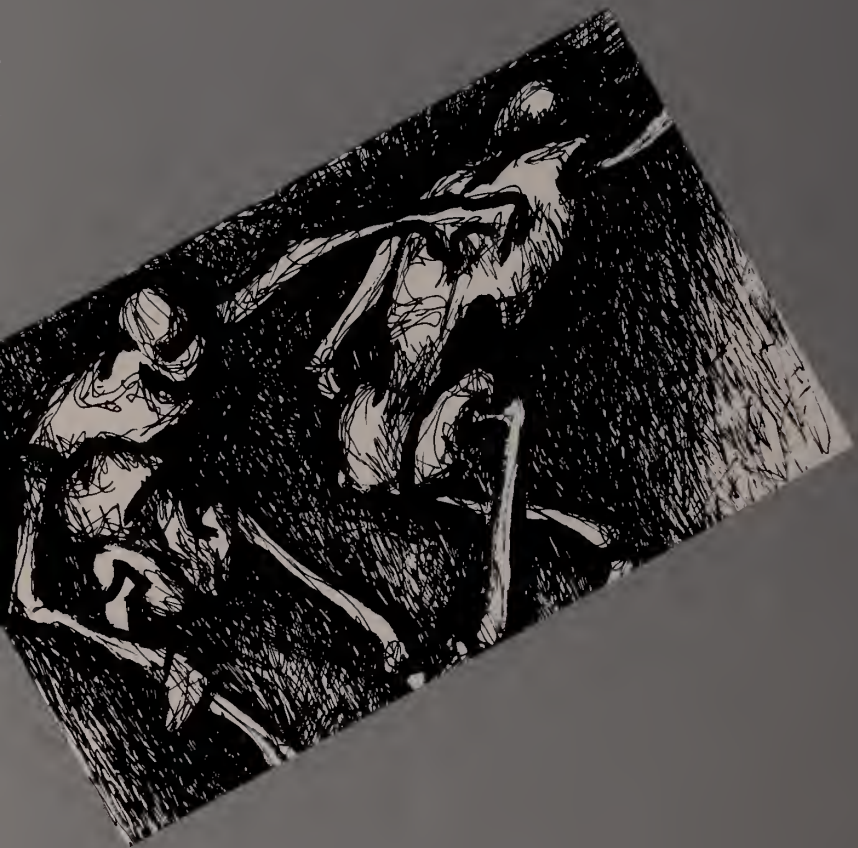
—Shelly L. Hall



Shawnie Hamburg

Contributors

• Richard M. Connor goes to work and reads Dylan Thomas in his spare time • Megan Gray Taylor is a Ph.D. student in English literature who lives by the motto "before truth, the right fork" • Dawnelle Loiselle is leaving Maryland to spin herself into a blur • Yolanda Mancilla is a Ph.D. candidate in clinical psychology whose poem "Dream for Tía Cuca" is reprinted from *Calyx*, vol 8, #2 • Kurt Kuss lives in Mt. Pleasant, D.C. and grows flowers • Michael Collier's book, *The Clasp* will be published in 1986 by Wesleyan University Press • Brook Haxton teaches creative writing at the University of Maryland. • Valerie Russell works at the Hornbake library • Cynthia Matsakis lives with her husband and two children in Takoma Park • Shawnie Hamburg is a sophomore transfer from Shephard College • Debbie Barfield is a senior journalism major • Roberta Duncan is a senior advertising and design major • Stephen Young's phone had been disconnecting • R.J. Moore is a junior studio art major with a minor in English • Andrew J. Looney is a senior computer science major but his real interest is in writing • Conrad McKethan "My lilting mellowness can soothe the inner sanctuns of your soul." • Jeff Jones is an advertising design major who wishes he was a fine arts major • Robert Marcum is a marginally employed, recent graduate and aspiring minimalist • David Waldman Something profound • Ray Smith is a graduate student currently working as a professional model and actor in Washington D.C. • Mark Stein is a Diamondback photographer • Caren Sachs is an artist • Kelly Waalkes is a photographer • Kelly Posey is a studio arts major • Betsy Anthony is a photographer who has helped with the layout of previous Calverts.



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